

Never Forget

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Summary: Fantasy plus reality doesn't equal a dream come true. During the trials and tribulations of war, three friends must come face-to-face with the truths and burdens of being a soldier. Camaraderie, loyalty and determination will be pushed beyond their limits. 21st Century life had never prepared them for this. As Spartans, how much will they be prepared to sacrifice?

Never Forget

"Life is eternal; and love is immortal; and death is only a horizon; and a horizon is nothing save the limit of our sight." - Rossiter W. Raymond

* * *

><p>Chapter 1

Sunday, 23rd September 2012, England

Connor loved Britain. He loved the familiarity of it all. He loved how every summer seemed to be 'the wettest summer on record'. Most of all, though, he probably couldn't deal with the lack of good comedy if he went to live abroad; nothing could beat a bit of QI.

Anyway, right now he was only 15. Travelling abroad was far from the front of his mind.

Although, if anything, it would ultimately be his friends that caused him to stay in the country when he got older. Connor wasn't the most social of people by any stretch of the imagination, so he found making friends was a bit of a pain. When he found them, though, they were awesome.

Well, usually...

"It's raining."

"Yeah, soâ€|?" An awkward silence hung in the air for a couple of seconds after Connor spoke.

"You like rain?" To anyone else, Josh's voice may have sounded like he really didn't give a shit, but that wasn't actually true. Normally.

"Thunder, the cold, overcastâ€|anything like that." He accompanied the statement with a simple shrug of the shoulders and a quick glance to his side, out of the window. 'Rain' was a bit of an understatement considering there was water running down the road like a mini stream, but oh well.

"Ah, you have bullshit weather over there." A strong, distinctly Polish accent stated. Connor could just feel the smugness emanate from the words.

"Yeah, I saw that t-shirt you were wearing, Igor!" Josh, one of Connor's best mates, remarked. Josh was basically the guy who really didn't care much about things. He could quite easily crack a subtle joke about something offensive right now. "Anyway, in Poland you get snowed in every day." He said in an off-handed, jokey manner. Both he and Connor had known Igor for around a year and a half, so they were good friends with the Pole. "So that's why most of you come over here..."

"Hey, I don't want this to turn into Banterbury Commons againâ€|" Connor trailed off and smirked just a little bit as he did so. None of them ever took things very seriously, and meaty banter was regular occurrence.

"Whatever, dude; means I don't need to go to school sometimes." The subject was quickly changed to something more relevant, and important, by Igor. "I sent you guys invites to the game likeâ€|10 minutes ago. Get your asses in here!"

Okay, the conversation was only happening through a party on Xbox live, but hey. Connor and Josh had practically taught English to him over the last year. It wasn't all bad. And it was good to get away from the troubles of life through stuff like this. Troubles like too much homeworkâ€|

Heh. Talk about first world problems.

"Y'know, we're going to get bloody annihilated by everyone."

"Connor, we all know you're a leet MLG sniper." Igor replied nonchalantly as he began searching for a match of capture the flag whilst Josh occupied himself by messing about with the armour. He was a bit vain when it came to armours and the like.

"Hey, when you two are slacking in the killing department, someone has to step up!" Connor said quick to defend himself.

Unfortunately, he was only joking. It had become a running joke within the group ever since Mass Effect 3 came out. Basically, it involved a lot of kill-stealing with snipers in multiplayer, only some of itâ€|No, all of it was intentional, really. If he was honest

with himself. Good times, good times.

Numbers then began to flash on Connor's screen down from ten to one andâ€|

"Oh, bloody hellâ€|" He muttered under his breath, although apparently loud enough for Josh and Igor to hear as well.

"What?" Josh slurred out in an almost incomprehensible, lazy mish-mash of noises. Noises that could probably only be recognised by another teenager.

A sense of panic began to filter into Connor's bloodstream like an injection of venom. Something was seriously wrong.

"Iâ€|I don'tâ€|Oh wait, no, don't worry." He sighed a little and reached over the right armrest of his leather chair and began browsing some of the music on his iPod. "Didn't have any songs playing."

"You would die without music."

"I don't think it's _that_bad, Josh."

"Yes it is! When I see you in the morning, you're listening to music. Lunchtime: music. After school: music." Josh laughed quietly over the mic as Connor turned the volume three quarters of the way up on his iPod which had been docked just a bit earlier on. The song 'Pull Harder on the Strings of Your Martyr' by 'Trivium' blared out of the speakers. Almost anything that he did could be done ten times better if he was listening to music, including playing games.

"Fine, I admit I'd be screwed without music, but almost everything is such bollocks without it."

"We're screwed in this match already. They just captured our flag inâ€|45 seconds."

"Thanks for the confidence boost, Igor." Josh sarcastically noted in his usual fashion.

"Alright, let's pick this up! I want to be able to get in some quick revision before that English controlled assessment tomorrow." Connor flashed a quick grin as he pulled off a triple kill with the sniper. The annoying squeak that the controller's right trigger had couldn't even be heard over the music; it was beautiful!

"Controlled Assessment?" There seemed to be a stunned silence on Josh's side of things.

"Yeahâ€|" He trailed off. The earlier grin was wiped from his face as soon as he was assassinated by a jet packer.

Connor could hear an irritated sigh from the headset. "Kraz is such a useless teacher!" There was a hint of incredulity in his voice. Incredulity and amusement. "Can't even get the assessment date right. Didn't care about English with him anyway."

"Well, dude, I failed in literature class. No biggie." Igor chipped in a little

"And Connor's failedâ€¦nothing. Seriously, how the hell can you do Chinese?"

"With difficulty...Lots of difficulty." Connor sounded exasperated, and rightly so. He briefly jumped into the thought-mobile and took a trip down memory lane. Back to the absolute nightmare that was the Chinese writing exam. He did pretty damn well on it, getting 85%, but it was excruciatingly hard.

He shook his head. It was best if memory lane decided to hit an abrupt dead-end now. He only had 5 kills to 3 deaths at the moment. Connor knew he'd never hear the end of it from Igor and Josh if he came in last place.

"I swear I'm, like, the only person trying to capture this. Hitting people with the flag is not easy."

"Wait a second, I'll be there-Oh bloody hell."

A large pop-up notice appeared on the screen with the dreaded 'You have been disconnected from Xbox Live' text on it. A flurry of other smaller messages popped up at the bottom of the screen stating things like 'Can't connect to party' and 'The servers for the game are temporarily unavailable'.

He resented the fact that there was no 4G in Britain. America was so lucky. It was only logical that the country which invented the internet should have 4G, butâ€¦that hadn't happened, unfortunately.

Attempting to connect again did nothing. In fact, the whole bloody thing decided to turn off. Maybe it was a sign that he should stop procrastinating and do a bit more revision. Then again, it was only Sunday morning. Plenty of time.

Chuckling the wireless controller back onto his bed, he made his way downstairs and into the kitchen, glad to feel the cool tiles underneath his bare feet. He was hungry. Hungry, but also feeling lazy. That meant a nice, easy bowl of bran flakes were in order. Nutritious and simple to make was always a winning combination. The young teen didn't waste a second before plopping onto the dark brown leather couch and digging into the food.

The music in his room was still playing, though it didn't actually matter because his parents were both out to look for a new fridge-freezer and T.V. Connor's parents had come from Scotland down to the south-west of England a good 8 years ago, so all of his extended family was still up there. Thankfully, that meant that there was no chance of being 'babysat'; if there was anything he really didn't like, it was being patronised and his mum and dad being overly-protective.

A sudden vibration almost caused Connor to lose his grip on the bowl â€" which would have been an absolute disaster â€" but he managed to prevent it. A wave of relief flooded through him. He didn't even want to think about what his mum's reaction would be if he spilt it on the living room carpet. Suffice it to say, it wouldn't be good.

The noise itself had come from his phone which he proceeded to

promptly pick up with his free hand. It was a text from Henry, another close friend of his. The text read: 'Airsoft at village at 3pm!'

Connor gave the screen of his phone a blank stare for a few seconds, then glanced up at the clock on the wall to his left.

'Bloody hell!' Were the only two words that he could put together in his mind.

It was 1pm, he still hadn't had a shower â€" he really didn't like going a day without showering â€" and didn't have any of his gear ready.

With this now clearly set out in his mind, Connor wolfed down the rest of his cereal, took a shower and changed into his full Czech woodland BDU within around 20 minutes. Considering he usually took about 20 minutes in the shower on a normal day this was a miracle. 'Heh. Airsoft takes priority over revision any day.'

Scribbling a quick note down on the nearest piece of paper he could find â€" which happened to be a certificate of excellence for German â€" Connor left it clearly on the kitchen table-top to make sure his parents knew where he was once they got back.

Being the paranoid guy he was, though, he made time to go back and check that there were no windows or doors left unlocked or that there were no switches left on; it caused him to feel a lot safer and more comfortable knowing that any potential burglar would need to expend at least some energy if they were to try and get in.

A ring of the doorbell suddenly kicked Connor into action. It was Henry. His mum always drove them down to the airsoft site. The now gear-laden 15 year old snatched up both the case he was carrying his weapons in â€" he'd be screwed if any of the police saw him carrying a replica M24 sniper and MP7 around â€" and the rucksack that held all of his snacks, drinks, extra BBs and the like. Scurrying down the stairs to the ground floor, Connor pulled open the front door to seeâ€¦to seeâ€¦|.

"The fuck?"

Connor stood there for a good few seconds, staring into the thick, inky blackness of, er...nothing. Everything seemed to just grind to halt, including his memory; he had completely forgotten about what he was doing before this.

After a short while, the logical thinking part of his brain began whirring into life again. The only reason for this...vision would be a dream because the laws of physics and theories of relativity don't allow things like this to happen in real life. Logic had served him very well in the past. Why not now? It was strange, though. He had never dreamed lucidly in his life. For the dream to be so vivid was amazing.

Connor laughed quietly to himself for a second before stepping backwards and slamming the door shut again. He opened it again only to see the exact same thing in front of him. Well, the same except for that odd, glowing red-eyed skull in the centre of the darkness. It was really quite off-putting, but something about it rang a few

bells.

'A halo multiplier skull?' A lightbulb in his head was swiftly turned up to full brightness. The fact that this was a dream meant Connor could do anything right now, so any sense of rationality was, quite understandably, tossed out of the window. There wasn't anything stopping him from just stepping out and grabbing the skull to see what happened, so why not?

It was absurd. Even for a dream! That didn't prevent Connor from jumping out with his full airsoft gear and snatching it out of the air with his free hand, though.

Before he could even laugh at the madness of it all, a bright white light flashed around him, forcing his grip to tighten around the skull as he seemed to be suspended in absolutely nothing. He glanced over his shoulder to where he had just jumped from. Empty space. This dream was taking him on one wild ride.

* * *

><p>Unknown date, unknown location

The next thing Connor even knew was him stumbling across a metal floor, struggling to keep balance and then slamming shoulder-first into a very hard metal wall. At the same time, he dropped the case of airsoft weapons he had been holding in his left hand and slumped against the metal plating. He struggled to comprehend just what had happened.

The pain that set in immediately after the impact felt pretty damn uncharacteristic of a dream that was for sure. The noise he made had probably attracted all sorts of attention to-

"H-hey! Who are-what did you-I don't-"

Connor head quickly snapped around. He could see that the person was in a huge amount of shock. Whoever he was was wearing some sort of white uniform. Almost navy-esque.

There wasn't any time for playing guess who right now, though, because this guy was likely to set off some sort of alarm once sense returned to him. Though that wasn't going to be for a while based on the amount of force he put into it.

Picking himself up off of the floor, Connor stepped over to the well-dressed man, gesturing for him to calm down. "Hey, don't worry. The reason I'm here is because...erâ€|" He trailed off, immediately following up by cracking him over his head with the skull. Unsurprisingly, he was knocked unconscious.

Without hesitation, Connor speedily looted the pockets of the person out cold. He felt great! For the first time ever he had purposefully caused harm to someone. It was kind of exhilarating...So what if it's a dream! The simple fact that he had taken a pistol that looked exactly

"Woah, what the fuck is this shi-wait, Connor? Josh?"

Connor struggled to come up with anything to say for a good few

moments, so there was an awkward silence that wrapped around the room for a while.

"Erâ€¦don't worry, we're just in the same lucid dream together..."

"Dream? But I was just in the fridge getting a bottle of fucking mountain dew!" His Polish friend replied, arms splayed out in front of him in bewilderment, though with his trademark 'what-the-shit' smile.

"Yeah, I wasn't asleep. I was about to have piss..." Connor raised an eyebrow at Josh.

"Lovely." Connor rolled his eyes but couldn't suppress just a little smile. Whether it was real or not didn't matter; it was definitely the mates he knew.

"What were you doing?" The question was fired at Connor from Josh.

"Going to go airsofting."

"So you weren't going on the Xbox again? Godammit."

"Doesn't really matter right now."

"Seriously, why does this all look like halo? And why do you have a skull multiplier?"

"Your guess is as good as mine." Connor gave one of his shoulders a light shrug and a quick look down at the cranium. "Anyway! Igor, see what info you can find on thatâ€¦wellâ€¦holographic computer there. Josh-" He nodded in his direction. "-me and you'll stay lookout."

"What's in that backpack?" Josh pointed to the black bag on Connor's back and then turned to look out of the window into the hallway.

"Sweets, chocolate, water and BBs. I needed it all; I was going airsofting." Connor threw it over to Josh who tentatively unzipped it and plucked out a yorkie. He raised his eyebrows and nodded in approval before dropping it back in.

"You're definitely not lacking calories in there."

"Boom!" Igor fist pumped and beckoned both his friends. "Says the date is February 10th 2519." His expression was one of both smugness and elation. Not surprising, especially after he had just figured out how to work such a futuristic computer. Then he realised what he had said. "2519? Shit." The tall Slav shook his head in disbelief. Each of them glanced at one another and then back to the screen.

Connor lowered his body and leaned on the desk with his left arm - the arm that still possessed the skull â€" and examined the display more closely, careful not to step on the unconscious body. He noticed on the top left of the screen three very distinctive, bold black capital letters: ONI.

"Where are we?" Connor gazed up and around the room they were in. There was one window at the very opposite of their end where torrents of light flooded in, basking the whole room in a warm summer glow. It was a nice addition of colour to the honestly quite bland greys, browns and silvers. One thing that he could be sure of was that they were on some sort of planet; a planet very similar to that of Earth. There was also a long pane of glass behind where the operator of the computer would have sat which gave view of a bright, artificially lit hallway.

"Hang on!" Igor tapped and swiped a few times on the blue-hued interface, bringing up a 3D model of a planet. "There! We're on Reach."

"Reach!? They train the Spartans here! John, Fred, Kelly, Linda, Kurt, Sam! all of them."

"So, this is still a dream, ri-"

Before Josh could finish the sentence, he was interrupted by a small, but very out of place, clanging of metal just on the other side of the door. At least two pairs of footsteps could faintly be heard. Connor's whole body snapped around, Josh and Igor following soon after. Right now, he was the only one with any sort of defence, so he took point, raising the handgun to eye-level.

His heart was racing at a million miles per hour and he was constantly readjusting his grasp on the pistol grip. Finally, he rested his index finger against the cold steel of the trigger. Whoever was out there weren't going to take him and his friends down with ease. At this point, Connor was finding it difficult to distinguish dream from reality.

Eventually, the door slid open. Connor lowered his weapon. All three of them were expecting a small squad of marines to waltz in and take them prisoner, so when a trio of children peered inside, the words 'shock' and 'incredulity' and 'bemusement' really were understatements of a massive magnitude.

Just what the bloody hell was going on?

End
file.